

News from Ed Markey

United States Congress

Massachusetts Seventh District

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MARKEY RELEASES RESPONSES FROM ADMINISTRATION ON LNG SAFETY

*Lawmaker to ask Homeland Security
Director Tom Ridge for "fresh look"*

Washington, DC: Rep. Edward Markey (D-MA), whose district includes the only operating LNG port facility on the East Coast, today released responses from the Secretary of Transportation to Rep. Markey's questions concerning the nature of the terrorism threat to the Distrigas Terminal LNG facility (Everett, MA) and steps taken to increase preparedness there. Markey had sent his questions to the Secretary on September 26, 2001. On the same day, importation of LNG to the Everett facility was temporarily banned by order of the Coast Guard. The Mayor of Boston, with the support of the Mayor of Everett and other area mayors, has filed a legal challenge the decision of the Coast Guard to reopen the facility.

"It is reassuring to know that this facility is receiving the attention it deserves from the federal government," said Markey, "but serious concerns are still outstanding and, in some ways, highlighted by this letter."

"For example," he continued, "The tangled web of federal, state and local authorities responsible for safety and security at the facility is a weakness that must be addressed, and I will be forwarding a formal request to Homeland Security Director Ridge in the near future urging him to untangle it. Right now, the Coast Guard is responsible for security for those few days that a ship arrives, docks, and departs. The rest of the year, it is unclear what federal agency is in charge of security at this facility."

"In addition, the Everett Police and Fire Departments, which DOT says are primarily responsible for 'onshore response', are already stretched too thin to provide the kind of ongoing permanent protection on land that the Coast Guard is providing in the harbor. The resources to provide this protection need to come either from the owners of the facility itself, or from state and federal sources."

"In short," Markey concluded, "the high level of national, state and local protection provided by the Unified Command under the Coast Guard for the occasional arrival of LNG tankers appears to collapse once the tanker departs, leaving only the local police and fire departments to cope with essentially the same risk of terrorist attack and fire."

The complete correspondence between Rep. Markey and Secretary Mineta can be found at <http://www.house.gov/markey/>. See "Latest News."

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